WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for the automatic configuration of a bi-directional Internet Protocol (IP) communication device, comprising:

broadcasting a request for basic configuration details, where said request contains a unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier associated with a unique user;

receiving said basic configuration details from a server, where said basic configuration details are assigned to said unique user based on said unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier; and

configuring said bi-directional IP communication device with said basic configuration details.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said broadcasting further comprises broadcasting said request for basic configuration details, including an IP address, to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) server, where said bi-directional IP communication device is a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) gateway.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said receiving comprises obtaining an IP address from said DHCP server.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising transmitting a configuration request for additional configuration details.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising receiving said additional configuration details specific to said unique user.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising configuring said bi-directional IP communication device with said additional configuration details.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising, before said broadcasting step, the steps of:

connecting said bi-directional IP communication device to an analog telephone line; and

powering said bi-directional IP communication device on.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising, before said broadcasting step, the step of automatically detecting a DSL communication circuit.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising, before said broadcasting step, the step of automatically determining Permanent Virtual Circuit (PVC) details for communications between said bi-directional IP communication device and a communications network.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said determining comprises the step of ascertaining a VPI/VCI (Virtual Path Identifier/Virtual Channel Identifier) pair for said communications.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said broadcasting comprises broadcasting a DHCP Discover request.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving comprises acquiring a DHCP Offer message from a DHCP server.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising, prior to said configuring step, the steps of:

sending a DHCP Request message to said DHCP server; and

receiving a DHCP acknowledge message from said DHCP server.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein said broadcasting and receiving steps occur automatically without any communication between said bi-directional IP communication device and a client computer coupled to said bi-directional IP communication device.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising , prior to said configuring step, the steps of:

assigning said unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier to said bi-directional IP communication device; and

associating said unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier with said unique user.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising generating a configuration table listing bi-directional IP communication device identifiers and associated users.

17. A bi-directional IP communication device, comprising:

a Central Processing Unit (CPU);

communication circuitry;

input/output ports; and

a memory containing:

a unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier;

instructions for broadcasting a request for basic configuration details, where said request contains a unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier associated with a unique user;

instructions for receiving said basic configuration details from a server, where said basic configuration details is assigned to said unique user based on said unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier; and

instructions for configuring said bi-directional IP communication device with said basic configuration details.

18. The bi-directional IP communication device of claim 17, wherein said instructions for broadcasting further comprise instructions for broadcasting said request for basic configuration details, including an IP address, to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) server, where

said bi-directional IP communication device is a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) gateway.

19. A computer program product for use in conjunction with a computer system for the automatic configuration of a bi-directional Internet Protocol (IP) communication device, the computer program product comprising a computer readable storage and a computer program stored therein, the computer program comprising:

instructions for broadcasting a request for basic configuration details, where said request contains a unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier associated with a unique user;

instructions for receiving said basic configuration details from a server, where said basic configuration details is assigned to said unique user based on said unique bi-directional IP communication device identifier; and

instructions for configuring said bi-directional IP communication device with said basic configuration details.

20. The computer program product of claim 19, wherein said instructions for broadcasting further comprise instructions for broadcasting said request for basic configuration details, including an IP address, to a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) server, where said bi-directional IP communication device is a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) gateway.